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“To impart knowledge or skills” is the dictionary’s definition of the verb “teach.” As teachers, this is our job, to impart knowledge and skills to our students. This task is seemingly easy, but when taken into consideration the amount of knowledge, charisma skills, time, effort, preparation and tools that go into being an effective teacher, it becomes a most challenging endeavor. A typical teacher is portrayed as a woman sitting behind her desk, or in front of a chalkboard, lecturing. This idea of a teacher is archaic, and now in the 21st century this kind of teacher is not as effective as she would have been years ago. To keep up to standards, teachers have to grow into the methods of the 21st century, namely through technology.

A 21st century classroom is a phrase used so frequently in college education classes that its true meaning bets buried under its repetitiveness. When you really think about what makes the 21st century classroom so different from others, it’s easy to see why it is so specifically referred to. Technology is what makes teaching in this century so very different from teaching in previous centuries. We had technology in previous centuries, but it was not as accessible as it is today. Everybody, or mostly everybody, in this century has access to a computer either in their home, in their school, or in their local library. Children are taught how to use these computers at a very young age, and how they grow up from these different technologies is also changing how they learn. The key to successful teaching is to connect the lesson or material being taught to the students. Connection is the key. This connection may at sometimes be very difficult. A math teacher might try to bring sports into his math problems, but while he might be connecting to the jocks, the rest of the classroom is lost. Technology is a fairly universal connection to this new generation of students.

A big reason why technology is such a huge connecting factor for students is because it is so versatile. For one, you can put the use of technology into something like a math problem with questions such as “if you text X amount of times an hour for .50 cents a text, how much money will you owe at the end of a week?” Not only can a question like this interest technology savvy people, but also anyone who has a cell phone. This example however is not the huge connecting factor that is so universal. The huge connecting factor is actually using the technology to teach different things in school.

There are many different technology tools that can be used to teach. One tool is called a Prezi. A Prezi is an online presentation tool that can be used to teach lessons that may include too many words for a simple lecture. Void of the usual slide-by-slide presentations, students will be enamored by the unexpected movements of the Prezi as it jumps from the top of the page to the bottom, and dives from one word into another. Used effectively and creatively, Prezi can be designed to entertain the students as well as teach them meaningful information.

Another tool that can be used is a smartboard. A smartboard allows a teacher to project her computer from a large screen and instead of working from behind her computer, she can interact with her computer screen from the smartboard. This is a great connecting tool because the kids will want to learn not only what is being taught, but also how to use the smart board, and they will like coming up to the board to answer questions because they get to use the smartboard pens and interact with this magic board just like a teacher would.

A third tool that is a great connecting tool is the use of cameras or videogames. Cameras used by the students to portray information can influence creativity and can awaken an interest in a project that would have originally lain dormant. Videogames are another good tool to use because they are entertaining. If a child is entertained while learning, he will be interactive and take away from the lesson a lot more than if he wasn’t entertained. A good portion of children play video games at home, and therefore if this tool is used inside a classroom, it sparks an interest and forms a connection, which allows for greater learning.

Teachers who use these tools understand the interests of the kids they teach, and they use these tools as a way to blend their interests into their lessons. If we, as teachers, can form these connections, we will provide the children with more meaningful learning because if the lessons and their interests mix, they will believe the information they are learning has a purpose. As more and more technology enters into our world, the more opportunities teachers will have to incorporate it into their classrooms. Being a 21st century teacher, however, does not only mean applying technology to classrooms, it means keeping up with the times. It means keeping up to new levels of learning, and understanding that the learning process, even for teachers, is a never ending process. The years of standing in front of chalkboards and pointing to it with a ruler are no more. Welcome to the 21st century.